

## WHAT PRICE "PERFINS"?

by

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Many years ago, pre-canceled stamps were looked upon by stampcollectors with the same disdain with which they regard damaged and torn stamps today. If I remember ~~xxx~~ correctly, it was the late Stephen Rich who first sensed the possibilities of these specialties and ~~xxx~~ began putting ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ these outcasts aside for future usage at a time when every other collector was giving them away or throwing them in the wastepaper basket.

When we now glance through the Mitchell-Hoover catalog of U.S. Bureau pre-canceled and see that a 1927 U.S. 1½ cent used ~~s~~ which Minkus prices at 5 c. as a pre-cancel is listed for a price of \$ 10.-- then it can indeed be said that: pre-cancels have come a long way.

I am not predicting that the same will happen to perfins. But, oddly enough, perfins today are in somewhat of the same position that pre-cancels were many years ago. About 30 years ago very few people were interested in perfins. Gradually here and there through the country and through the world an isolated collector began putting them aside. These isolated collectors found out about each other and in due time a club was formed: The Perfinclub, which now has over 200 members, many in foreign countries. These men are working hard at their hobby.

Information is being exchanged. The need for a catalog was felt and so they got to work with vigor on that program particularly.

Today, not only a complete catalog of U.S. perfins is available to the club members but catalogs of foreign perfins as well: Netherlands and Danish perfin lists have been published. An illustrated catalog of Belgian perfins has been placed on the market. An illustrated compilation of U.S. perfins also is available.

All this goes to show that perfins today also have come a long way. What the future holds we do not know.

The difference between the above mentioned perfin catalogs and the ordinary stamp catalog such as the world wide catalog of Minkus is that the latter not only lists all stamps but also gives information on their prices. The perfin lists published up to now do not contain any prices. So we come to the topic of this article: what about prices of perfins? Why do the published perfin catalogs not give also indication of their value?

This last question is easily answered: perfin catalogs do not give prices because for a complete price list for instance on Danish perfins alone we would have a book comparable in size to Minkus catalog, volume No. 1 which contains all stamps of Great Britain and its colonies. A simple calculation will make this clear.

There are 750 known different perfin designs of Denmark. Minkus worldwide stamp catalog lists nearly 400 different stamps of Denmark, exclusive of lithographic and color varieties.

Theoretically therefor the possibilities are that there are 300,000 different Danish perfins. Granted that this is a very much theoretical calculation, nobody will accuse us of exaggeration when we take 10% of this theoretical total as a good practical figure. Now, a list of 30,000 stamps, each individually priced, still would give us a voluminous book

And this would only ~~xxx~~ cover one single country, whereas there are 129 different countries in the world that at one time or another have used perfins.

For Holland the comparable figures would be approximately 600 perfin types and approximately 700 different stamps or a theoretical total of 420,000. And for the United States with over 4000 types of perfin and more than 1000 different stamps we come to the staggering figure of 4 million; even 10 % is still an enormous total of 400,000. For our country alone we would have to list twice as many stamps as are listed in all Minkus catalogs together. These observations show clearly that we can never expect to see a complete perfin price list issued, now or at any time in the future.

Let us now return to the question, so often asked: what are perfins worth?

Any discussion on this subject must commence with the well known fact that to an orthodox stamp collector a perfin is a damaged stamp and consequently, rule I is: for a regular stamp collector a perfin is worthless.

To the perfin collector the value of a perfin depends on many things. One is the country of origin.

Generally speaking, Danish perfins are quite common. As stated before, a total of about 750 types are known. On the other hand Brazil perfins are relatively rare. Only 11 types are known of which 3 have never been actually seen and of which of some only ONE known copy exists.

So we can again generally speaking, say: Danish perfins are cheap and Brazilian perfins are expensive.

Another matter influencing the amount a perfin collector can pay for material useful to his collecting activities is the manner in which it is offered to him, that is bulk mixtures of unknown and often doubtful contents or single, readily identifiable items of which he knows immediately that they can be fitted into his collection.

When a regular stamp collector and dealers in their search for material scout through large quantities of stamps and put the perfins they encounter aside, this takes very little effort and time on their part. The resulting perfin mixtures at present are evaluated at about \$ 0.75 per 1000 postpaid. Probably a little more for mixtures having mostly stamps from the period before 1930 and somewhat less for such mixtures having predominantly stamps from the period after 1930.

I am speaking now of U.S. stamps. Mixtures of this nature of foreign stamps will rate \$ 1.25 to 1.50 per thousand.

When considering the fairness of this price, one must realize that quite often when purchasing these mixtures the perfin collector acquires 98% useless material in multiple duplication of a few types and issues. It takes thousands and thousands of perfins before one finds a real good one.

But if someone has a Netherlands stamp, Minkus No. 105, the 2½ guilder which catalogs, used at \$ 0.50 to \$ 1.00, and this stamp has the perfin V.D.B. on it, I venture to say it is worth at least \$ 1.50 or several times catalog value. This stamp was first issued in 1899 and was demonitized in 1935. The total quantity issued is not known, but should be considerable to judge by present day prices. A fair guess would be around 250,000. However, the owner of perfin V.D.B., the firm of J.B. van der Schoot in Hilligom, Holland, famous Dutch tulip bulb raisers probably very seldom used such a high value stamp for their shipments. Consequently, this stamp with their perfin on it - incidentally, the only known 2½ guilder perfin of Holland - is well worth a premium over ordinary catalog value.

Finland is another example of relatively high priced perfins.

There are only known 10 different perfin types of this country and some of these are really rare and very hard to get by. Consequently, altho the proto-type say of Minkus, Finland No.79 is catalogued at only 2 to 3 cts. as a perfin with the type F & Co, or JGW on it, the stamps would be worth no doubt many times their ordinary catalog value.

I venture to say that a Brazilian stamp with the perforation D & C on it would be worth several dollars, whereas it may catalog only 3 cts.

The relative rarity of perfins can best be established by keeping track statistically of the exact number of each one, contained in a large mixture, say of 100,000. For Denmark and Holland this has been done and it can be stated that in general any perfin of Denmark Minkus No.457, and 470 are rare and worth several times their catalog value. On the other hand, Denmark Minkus no.462 is very common. Most semi-postals with perfins of Denmark on them are rare and should trade at or above their catalog value. The same goes for Holland semi-postals.

Although the normal issues with the faces of King Christian X or King Frederick IX of Denmark are plentiful, some issues are rare as perfins such as the 1912 postoffice issue, Minkus No.111 and the 1924 postal service commemorative issue Minkus No.250 et al.

More specifically, certain perfin types are rare in whatever issue they do exist. Examples of this for Denmark include:

A G, 9	A/s D	4½	B.P	7
A G A 7½	A U	11	B T T	?
A N CO 6½	B	19	F D	7½
A P/C F, 2 H 5'	BogD	7		

and many others.

Quite often these exist on only one type of stamp. The explanation for this probably is that the particular company bought a perforating machine and instead of seeing to it that some one was properly instructed in the operation of this machine, the gadget was turned over to some office boy who forthwith proceeded to experiment on cardboard with it or maybe put too many sheets of stamps in it at one time with the result that several pins broke off and the whole idea of perforating stamps was given up.

Often also a perfin collector will find a perfin on a very early issue, maybe of 1900 to 1905 and then a large gap exists until at once it appears again, say on a late 1947 or 1948 issue. Here we obviously have a case of neglect by the management to enforce the rule that stamps shall be immediately perforated upon arrival in the office, with the result that gradually the machine drifts into disuse. Then a sudden change to more punctual management puts the machine back into operation and changes in the philatelic world what was a rare perfin into a common one again.

In between bulk purchases of large mixtures and acquisition of single specific perfins is the market for selected mixtures of all different perfins, whether they be types or issues.

As there is a considerable amount of work connected with the preparation of such mixtures an approximate price of ½ ct per stamp

contained in such mixtures is not out of reason. The same rule applies here which governs such mixtures of ordinary stamps and that is that the larger the mixtures, the higher the average price per stamp.

Thus a mixture of 400 different perfins may be priced at \$ 1.50 whereas 1200 different ones of the same country probably should bring \$ 10.00

For dutch perfins, another part of the international perfin field which has been subjected to closer study than most others it can be said that in general any type of perfin on Minkus Nos 233, 234, 235, 203, 204, 205, 206, 278, 575, 590, 637 and 573 all are relatively rare and worth at least 50% of catalog value, in most cases more. At least a dozen specific types of perfins are known on only one type of stamp and thus these are in demand at a premium over catalog value.

Summarizing what has been discussed above; it can be stated, that:

- 1- bulk perfin stamps are worth very little, ~~much~~ due to the uncertainty of the contents of the mixture.  
For U.S. prior to 1930 a price of \$ 1.00 per thousand post 1930 about 0.50 per thousand and for foreign about \$ 1.50 per thousand.
- 2- ordinary perfins are worth 20 to 25% of catalog value.
- 3- specific perfins are worth several times up to many times their stated catalog value.
- 4- prepared mixtures of all different perfins at a price of from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 ct per perfin are considered moderate.